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Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) works with academics from top research institutions to discover sustainable ways to lift these households out of extreme poverty and to support the scale-up of effective programs. In recent years, IPA has helped propel breakthrough findings—particularly on cash transfers and the “big-push” strategy known as the Graduation approach—into large-scale programs, reaching tens of millions of people. We are now testing variations of the Graduation approach in Ghana, Uganda, and the Sahel to identify what drives the impacts and how to make it more cost-effective.

Key Policy Lessons

1. Cash grants are a cost-effective way to increase the well-being of the poor.
2. A “big push” livelihood approach can create sustained improvement in the lives of the poor.

Policy Impact: Cash Grants

Recent research by IPA and our affiliates has shown that unconditional cash grants can make substantial positive impacts on the lives of the poor, including increases in income, assets, food consumption, and female empowerment. The evidence, and the ensuing publicity around cash transfers, has changed the way we think about giving cash to the poor and created a valuable benchmark against which to evaluate other programs. The evidence has also helped the leading organizations that administer unconditional cash grants, GiveDirectly, raise substantial funds to provide grants to people living on less than \$2 a day. <http://www.povertyaction.org/publications/designing-effective-cash-grants>

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>. Accessed November 7, 2016.

Social Protection Program Brief

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